



SANDRA SHEWRY
Director

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
Department of Health Services



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
Governor

INFO ONLY _____
ACTION NEEDED X
POLICY CHANGE _____
_____ Administration
_____ Nutrition Staff
 X All Staff Affected
_____ ISIS Change

ATN: # 10-11-05-077

October 11, 2005

To: DHS WIC PWPC

Subject: Follow-up to Operational Changes Discussed at the CWA Management Conference

I am writing in follow-up to my closing remarks at the CWA Management Conference, where I “assigned” two tasks to local WIC directors as “first steps” in the “Go for the Gold” campaign we kicked off at that meeting. Those tasks were as listed below and can be found in the GO for the GOLD binder, tab 4:

1. Produce the **ISIS Unissued Prescriptions by Prescription Month** report to calculate your program’s Unissued Food Instrument (FI) rate for the past month. This number indicates how many of your enrolled participants did not receive FI's for the month, either by visiting the WIC office or by receiving them in the mail. If your program’s Unissued FI (UFI) rate is greater than nine percent (9%) of your total month’s participation, you need to consider what you can do to reduce it.
2. Produce the report that provides program’s single issue (SI), double-issue (DI) and triple issue (TI) numbers for the past month and use them to calculate your program’s single issue rate. This number indicates the percent of participants who received FIs for one month and who are scheduled to return next month to receive their Fis. The statewide SI rate is 62 percent (62%). Therefore, if your program’s SI rate is greater than 65 percent of your total participation, you need to consider what steps you can take to reduce it.

In this week’s note, I’ll focus on Unissued Food Instruments; in a second note to come out early next week, I’ll focus on issuing less frequently in some cases, but “making every WIC visit count”.

Appointment Practices

Over the past 30 years, WIC staff has been wedded to the concept of making, and instructing WIC participants to keep, appointments. In fact, it is so embedded in our culture that we saw it as a great advantage of ISIS over other states' automated systems that ISIS includes an automated appointment module. The unintended consequence of this system is that it creates an additional set of rules that participants must follow in order to receive WIC services. It is critical that staff understand these rules are **completely independent of any federal or state policy** and are driven entirely by the local agency. We need as a community to re-think these practices and to ask ourselves to what extent they exist for staff convenience at participants' expense.

There was a great deal of discussion at the conference about accepting "walk-ins" and about how to work through the issue with staff members who may be uncomfortable with this practice. What seems clear from information presented at the conference is that most participants, when called, do come to WIC within a few days of the originally scheduled time if they are encouraged to do so; barriers to WIC service can be greatly reduced by not requiring participants to call in to reschedule if they miss their first visit.

Once a person is at WIC office, s/he should not leave without checks unless there are certification requirements that have not been met. By encouraging participants to come in whenever they can, staff presents a welcoming environment and may actually reduce their Unissued FI rate without increasing the number of FIS needing to be mailed.

Goal: Decrease Missed FI Rate—Practices and Clarifications

1. This memo provides authority to **mail FIs more than once in a certification period** as appropriate, provided that certification requirements are met and the participant receives a second nutrition education contact during the certification period. As always, mailing must be preceded by a phone call to establish the correct mailing address and hopefully can include some over-the-phone trouble-shooting/education.
2. This memo provides authority to **mail two or three months of FIs in October and November 2005** to reduce travel during the holidays due to high gasoline prices, provided that certification requirements are met and the participant receives a second nutrition education contact during the certification period. The reason to document in ISIS is "transportation."

3. Other suggestions that came out of the conference:
 - Autodialers work well for reminder calls, but person-to-person phone calls enable staff to trouble-shoot with the person and to determine if mailing is the preferred option. If staff makes these calls early in the month, it saves rushing at the end.
 - In many cases, participants may prefer to come in, and here is another chance to emphasize that anytime is OK.
 - Use the phone call to provide breastfeeding support and encouragement for pregnant and breastfeeding women.
 - Be open to calling and mailing to pregnant women who are close to their EDD.
4. That last item in the above list brings me to my final point. We heard widespread interest in the PHFE report about enrollment of infants when the mother or other parent/guardian cannot come into the WIC office. We expect to complete our final research on federal policy on this issue within the next two weeks. Approval to conduct this practice statewide has been contingent on data showing that program integrity is maintained and our ability to frame an acceptable response, should USDA question the procedure. It has been extremely helpful to know that this practice may help improve exclusive breastfeeding rates.

Thanks to everybody for all that you are doing to “Go for the Gold”—more coming!

Michele Y. van Eyken, RD, MPH
Deputy Chief
Nutrition Programs
California WIC Supplemental Nutrition Program

Primary WIC Program Contact
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